

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 03806 01 OF 02 111547Z

44

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 SS-15 NSC-05

PA-02 PRS-01 SAM-01 AGR-10 SP-02 EB-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00

STR-04 A-01 H-02 /064 W

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9735

INFO USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 03806

DEPT PLEASE PASS DEPT OF AGRICULTURE. WASHDC

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, US, UK

SUBJECT: PRESS ARTICLE ON MR. ARMSTRONG

REFERENCE: STATE 058150

1. THE GUARDIAN THIS MORNING CARRIED THE FOLLOWING STORY SUGGESTING THAT TOBIN ARMSTRONG'S ASSIGNMENT AS SPECIAL ADVISOR TO SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE BUTZ MAY PUT HIM INTO CONFLICT WITH EEC COUNTRIES, INCLUDING BRITAIN, AND, THEREFORE BY IMPLICATION, WITH MRS. ARMSTRONG'S RESPONSIBILITIES AS AMBASSADOR TO BRITAIN. FULL TEXT OF STORY FOLLOWS: BEGIN TEXT THE WEALTHY HUSBAND OF MRS. ANNE ARMSTRONG, THE NEW US AMBASSADOR TO BRITAIN, IS TO BE EMPLOYED BY THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT TO PROMOTE THE SALE OF US FEED GRAINS TO EUROPE-- A JOB THAT IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO BRING HIM INTO CONFLICT WITH EEC COUNTRIES, INCLUDING BRITAIN.

DURING THE COUPLE'S OVERSEAS ASSIGNMENT, MR. TOBIN ARMSTRONG, A TEXAS RANCHER WILL WORK FOR THE US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE. ALTHOUGH HE WILL NOT BE PAID, HE WILL BE REIMBURSED FOR TRAVEL AND EXPENSES AS HE TRIES TO ENCOURAGE EUROPEAN CONSUMERS TO EAT MORE BEEF AND

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 LONDON 03806 01 OF 02 111547Z

FEED PROCESSORS TO USE MORE AMERICAN CORN AND OTHER

PROTEIN-RICH PRODUCTS, INCLUDING SOYA BEARS.

HE TOLD THE WASHINGTON POST ON TUESDAY THAT HE HAD BEEN LOOKING FOR SOMETHING PRODUCTIVE TO DO WHILE ABROAD AND DISCUSSED THE MARKETING ROLE WITH THE US AGRICULTURE SECRETARY, MR. EARL BUTZ.

"HE PICKED IT RIQHT UP," MR. ARMSTRONG SAID. BUT HE ADDED THAT HE WOULD NOT PERFORM ANY PROMOTIONAL WORK IN BRITAIN SINCE THAT "WOULDN'T BE APPROPRIATE" IN VIEW OF HIS WIFE'S POSITION.

BUT AMERICA'S POLICY/ON AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS IS ONE OF THE MOST EXPLOSIVE ISSUES SURROUNDING US-EEC RELATIONS. THE UNITED STATES IS FURIOUS WITH THE EEC FOR DECIDING LAST WEEK TO FORCE EUROPEAN FARMERS TO USE SUROLUS HOME-PRODUCED SKIMMED MILK POWDER IN ANIMAL FEED INSTEAD OF THE LESS EXPENSIVE SOYA BEANS PRODUCED IN AMERICA.

ATTACKING THE EEC'S INITIATIVES--HOWEVER CONNTRO-VERSIAL THEY MAY BE--IS EQUIVALENT DIPLOMATICALLY TO ATTACKING BRITISH MINISTERS, WHO ARE PARTY TO DECISIONS MADE IN BRUSSELS. AT THE SAME TIME, BRITISH FARMERS ARE STRONG SUPPORTERS OF THE EEC'S COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY AND THE PROTECTION IT GIVES THEM AGAINST OVERSEAS COMPETITORS.

THE EEC PRICE OF SUCH PRODUCTS AS MAIZE AND WHEAT IS CONTINUALLY INCREASING. WITH LEVIES AGAINST IMPORTS FROM THE UNITED STATES RISING IN PARALLEL. A MAJOR GOAL OF US NEGOTIATORS HAS BEEN TO QET THE EEC TO LOWER ITS IMPORT BARRIERS.

ONE SENIOR BRITISH OFFICIAL WHO OREFERRED TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS, SAID YESTERDAY THAT MR. ARMSTRONG'S OOST WAS "CLEARLY A MATTER OF CONCERN."--BRITAIN WOULD BE DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN HIS ACTIVITIES.

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PAGE 01 LONDON 03806 02 OF 02 111547Z

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UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 03806

ANOTHER SAID THAT HE THOUGHT THE APPOINTMENT WAS A GIMMICK TO BOOST PRESIDENT FORD'S IMAGE WITH THE MIDDLE WEST IN AN ELECTION YEAR.

IN WASHINGTON, MR. PAUL DBLING, GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE, THE CONGRESS WATCH-DOG AGENCY, TOLD THE WASHINGTON POST THAT HE DID NOT KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT MR. ARMSTRONG'S JOB TO SAY WHETHER A CONFLICT OF INTEREST WAS INVOLVED, GIVEN HIS WIFE'S POSITION.

BUT, HE SAID, UNDER THE LAW, IT WAS IRRELEVANT WHETHER A PERSON WAS PAID OR NOT. END TEXT.

2. WE ARE DEALING WITH PRESS INQUIRIES WHICH HAVE ARISEN FROM THE GUARDIAN STORY IN A PURELY FACTUAL MANNER, ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES, ATTRIBUTED TO U.S. OFFICIALS IN LONDON: MR. ARMSTRONG SEES HIS PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES HERE AS SUPPORTING MRS ARMSTRONG IN HER DUTIES AS U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BRITAIN. AS HE IS ABLE TO FIND TIME ABOVE AND BEYOND THESE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES, HE WILL ASSIST SECRETARY BUTZ BY HELPING TO STIMULATE THE CONSUMPTION OF ANIMAL PROTEIN FOOD SUCH AS MEAT AND POULTRY WITH A VIEW TO INCREASING U.S. EXPORTS OF FEED GRAINS AND BREEDING STOCK. HIS UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 LONDON 03806 02 OF 02 111547Z

RESPONSIBILITIES WILL BE INTERNATIONAL. THEY WILL NOT INVOLVE THE U.K., BUT WILL INCLUDE WESTERN AND EASTERN EUROPE, THE MIDDLE EAST AND OTHER AREAS THAT SECRETARY BUTZ MAY DESIGNATE. IN CARRYING OUT THE TASK, HE WILL BE MEETING WITH THE TRADE AND WITH U.S. AGRICULTURAL ATTACHES IN THE AREA. HIS JOB IS COMPLEMENTARY TO AND IS AN EXTENSION OF MARKET DEVELOPMENT WORK CARRIED ON OVERSEAS BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IN MANY FIELDS, INCLUDING AGRICULTURE, FOR A GREAT MANY YEARS. THIS IN NO WAY CONFLICTS WITH THE WORK OF THE U.S. AMBASSADOR IN BRITAIN. THE AGRICULTURAL ATTACHE'S OFFICE IN THE EMBASSY HERE CARRIES ON SIMILAR ACTIVITIES IN THE U.K. UNDER HER SUPERVISION. ARMSTRONG

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